



Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

ART. IX.—*An Essay on American Poetry, with several Miscellaneous Pieces on a variety of subjects, Sentimental, Descriptive, Moral, and Patriotic. By Solymán Brown, A. M.* New Haven, Flagg & Gray, 1818.

OF the poetry of the United States different opinions have been entertained, and prejudice on the one side, and partiality on the other, have equally prevented a just and rational estimate of its merits. Abroad, our literature has fallen under unmerited contumely, from those who were but slenderly acquainted with the subject on which they professed to decide; and at home, it must be confessed, that the swaggering and pompous pretensions of many have done not a little to provoke and excuse the ridicule of foreigners. Either of these extremes exerts an injurious influence on the cause of letters in our country. To encourage exertion and embolden merit to come forward, it is necessary that they should be acknowledged and rewarded—few will have the confidence to solicit what has been withheld from claims as strong as theirs, or the courage to tread a path which presents no prospect but the melancholy wrecks of those who have gone before them. National gratitude—national pride—every high and generous feeling that attaches us to the land of our birth, or that exalts our characters as individuals, ask of us that we should foster the infant literature of our country, and that genius and industry, employing their efforts to hasten its perfection, should receive, from our hands, that celebrity which reflects as much honour on the nation which confers it as on those to whom it is extended. On the other hand, it is not necessary for these purposes—it is even detrimental to bestow on mediocrity the praise due to excellence, and still more so is the attempt to persuade ourselves and others into an admiration of the faults of favourite writers. We make but a contemptible figure in the eyes of the world, and set ourselves up as objects of pity to our posterity, when we affect to rank the poets of our own country with those mighty masters of song who have flourished in Greece, Italy, and Britain. Such extravagant admiration may spring from a praise-worthy and patriotic motive, but it seems to us that it defeats its own object of encouraging our literature, by seducing those, who would aspire to the favour of the public, into an imitation of imperfect models, and leading them to rely too much on the partiality of their countrymen to overlook their deficiencies. Were our rewards to be bestowed only on

what is intrinsically meritorious, merit alone would have any apology for appearing before the public. The poetical adventurer should be taught that it is only the productions of genius, taste, and diligence that can find favour at the bar of criticism—that his writings are not to be applauded merely because they are written by an American, and are not decidedly bad ; and that he must produce some more satisfactory evidence of his claim to celebrity than an extract from the parish register. To show him what we expect of him, it is as necessary to point out the faults of his predecessors, as to commend their excellencies. He must be taught, as well what to avoid, as what to imitate. This is the only way of diffusing and preserving a pure taste, both among those who read and those who write, and, in our opinion, the only way of affording merit a proper and effectual encouragement.

It must however be allowed, that the poetry of the United States, though it has not reached that perfection to which some other countries have carried theirs, is yet even better than we could have been expected to produce, considering that our nation has scarcely seen two centuries since the first of its founders erected their cabins on its soil, that our literary institutions are yet in their infancy, and that our citizens are just beginning to find leisure to attend to intellectual refinement and indulge in intellectual luxury, and the means of rewarding intellectual excellence. For the first century after the settlement of this country, the few quaint and unskilful specimens of poetry which yet remain to us, are looked upon merely as objects of curiosity, are preserved only in the cabinet of the antiquary, and give little pleasure, if read without reference to the age and people which produced them. A purer taste began after this period to prevail—the poems of the Rev. John Adams, written in the early part of the eighteenth century, which have been considered as no bad specimen of the poetry of his time, are tolerably free from the faults of the generation that preceded him, and show the dawns of an ambition of correctness and elegance. The poetical writings of Joseph Green, Esq. who wrote about the middle of the same century, have been admired for their humour and the playful ease of their composition.

But, previous to the contest which terminated in the independence of the United States, we can hardly be said to have had any national poetry. Literary ambition was not then frequent amongst us—there was little motive for it, and few

rewards. We were contented with considering ourselves as participating in the literary fame of that nation, of which we were a part, and of which many of us were natives, and aspired to no separate distinction. And indeed we might well lay an equal claim, with those who remained on the British soil, to whatever glory the genius and learning as well as the virtue and bravery of other times reflected on the British name. These were qualities which ennobled our common ancestors; and though their graves were not with us, and we were at a distance from the scenes and haunts which were hallowed by their deeds, their studies, and their contemplations, yet we brought with us, and preserved all the more valuable gifts which they left to their posterity and to mankind—their illumination—their piety—their spirit of liberty—reverence for their memory and example and all the proud tokens of a generous descent.

Yet here was no theatre for the display of literary talent—the worshippers of fame could find no altars erected to that divinity in America, and he who would live by his pen must seek patronage in the parent country. Some men of taste and learning amongst us, might occasionally amuse their leisure with poetical trifles, but a country struggling with the difficulties of colonization, and possessing no superfluous wealth, wanted any other class of men rather than poets. Accordingly we find the specimens of American poetry, before this period, mostly desultory and occasional—rare and delicate exotics, cultivated only by the curious.

On our becoming an independent empire, a different spirit began to manifest itself, and the general ambition to distinguish ourselves as a nation was not without its effect on our literature. It seems to us, that it is from this time only that we can be said to have poets of our own, and from this period it is that we must date the origin of American poetry. About this time, flourished Francis Hopkinson, whose humorous ballad, entitled the *Battle of the Kegs*, is in most of our memories, and some of whose attempts, though deficient in vigour, are not inelegant. The keen and forcible invectives of Dr. Church, which are still recollected by his contemporaries, received an additional edge and sharpness from the exasperated feelings of the times. A writer in verse of inferior note was Philip Freneau, whose pen seems to have been chiefly employed on political subjects, and whose occasional productions, distinguished by a coarse strength of sarcasm, and abounding

with allusions to passing events, which is perhaps their greatest merit, attracted in their time considerable notice, and in the year 1786 were collected into a volume. But the influence of that principle which awoke and animated the exertions of all who participated in the political enthusiasm of that time, was still more strongly exemplified in the Connecticut poets—Trumbull, Dwight, Barlow, Humphreys, and Hopkins—who began to write about this period. In all the productions of these authors, there is a pervading spirit of *nationality* and patriotism—a desire to reflect credit on the country to which they belonged, which seems, as much as individual ambition, to have prompted their efforts, and which at times gives a certain glow and interest to their manner.

McFingal, the most popular of the writings of the former of these poets, first appeared in the year 1782. This pleasant satire on the adherents of Britain in those times, may be pronounced a tolerably successful imitation of the great work of Butler—though, like every other imitation of that author, it wants that varied and inexhaustible fertility of allusion, which made all subjects of thought—the lightest and most abstruse parts of learning—every thing in the physical and moral world—in art or nature, the playthings of his wit. The work of Trumbull cannot be much praised for the purity of its diction. Yet perhaps great scrupulousness in this particular was not consistent with the plan of the author, and, to give the scenes of his poem their full effect, it might have been thought necessary to adopt the familiar dialect of the country and the times. We think his *Progress of Dulness* a more pleasing poem, as more finished, and more perfect in its kind, and though written in the same manner, more free from the constraint and servility of imitation. The graver poems of Trumbull contain some vigorous and animated declamation.

Of Dr. Dwight we would speak with all the respect due to talents, to learning, to piety, and a long life of virtuous usefulness—but we must be excused from feeling any high admiration of his poetry. It seems to us modelled upon a manner altogether too artificial and mechanical. There is something strained, violent, and out of nature, in all his attempts. His *Conquest of Canaan* will not secure immortality to its author. In this work the author has been considered by some as by no means happy in the choice of his fable—however this may be, he has certainly failed to avail himself of the advantages it offered him—his epic wants the creations and colour-

ings of an inventive and poetical fancy—the charm, which, in the hands of genius, communicates an interest to the simplest incidents, and something of the illusion of reality to the most improbable fictions. The versification is remarkable for its unbroken monotony. Yet it contains splendid passages, which, separated from the body of the work, might be admired, but a few pages pall both on the ear and the imagination. It has been urged in its favor that the writer was young—the poetry of his maturer years does not however seem to possess greater beauties or fewer faults. The late Mr. Den-
nie at one time exerted his ingenuity to render this poem popular with his countrymen; in the year 1800 he published, in the *Farmer's Museum*, a paper printed at Walpole, of which he was the editor, a series of observations and criticisms on the *Conquest of Canaan*, after the manner of Addison in those numbers of the *Spectator* which made Milton a favourite with the English people. But this attempt did not meet with success—the work would not sell, and loads of copies yet cumber the shelves of our booksellers. In the other poems of Dr. Dwight, which are generally obnoxious to the same criticisms, he sometimes endeavours to descend to a more familiar style, and entertains his reader with laborious attempts at wit, and here he is still unsuccessful. Parts of his *Greenfield Hill*, and that most unfortunate of his productions, the *Triumph of Infidelity*, will confirm the truth of this remark.

Barlow, when he began to write, was a poet of no inconsiderable promise. His *Hasty Pudding*, one of his earliest productions, is a good specimen of mock-heroic poetry, and his *Vision of Columbus*, at the time of its first appearance, attracted much attention and was hailed as an earnest of better things. It is no small praise to say, that when appointed by the General Assembly of Churches in Connecticut, to revise Watts' Version of the Psalms, and to versify such as were omitted in that work, he performed the task in a manner which made a near approach to the simplicity and ease of that poet, who, according to Dr. Johnson, 'has done better than any body else what nobody has done well.' In his maturer years, Barlow became ambitious of distinguishing himself and doing honour to his country, by some more splendid and important exertion of his talents, and, for this purpose, projected a national epic, in which was sung the *Discovery of America*, the successful struggle of the states in the defence of their liberties, and the exalted prospects which were opening

before them. It is to be regretted that a design, so honourable and so generously conceived, should have failed. In 1807 appeared the *Columbiad*, which was his poem of the *Vision of Columbus*, much enlarged, and with such variations as the feelings and reflections of his riper age and judgment led him to make. The *Columbiad* is not, in our opinion, so pleasing a poem, in its present form, as in that in which it was originally written. The plan of the work is utterly destitute of interest, and that, which was at first sufficiently wearisome, has become doubly so by being drawn out to its present length. Nor are the additions of much value, on account of the taste in which they are composed. Barlow, in his later poetry, attempted to invigorate his style, but instead of drawing strength and salubrity, from the pure wells of ancient English, he corrupted and debased it with foreign infusions. The imposing but unchaste glitter, which distinguished the manner of Darwin and his imitators, appears likewise to have taken strong hold on his fancy, and he has not scrupled to bestow on his poem much of this meretricious decoration. But notwithstanding the bad taste in which his principal work is composed—notwithstanding he cannot be said to write with much pathos, or many of the native felicities of fancy, there is yet enough, in the poetry of Mr. Barlow to prove, that, had he fixed his eye on purer models, he might have excelled, not indeed in epic or narrative poetry, nor in the delineation of passion and feeling, but in that calm, lofty, sustained style, which suits best with topics of morality and philosophy, and for which the vigour and spirit of his natural manner, whenever he permits it to appear, shew him to have been well qualified.

Humphreys was a poet of humbler pretensions. His writings, which were first collected in 1790, are composed in a better taste than those of the two last, and if he has less genius, he has likewise fewer faults. Some of his lighter pieces are sufficiently pretty. He is most happy when he aims at nothing beyond an elegant mediocrity, and to do him justice this is generally the extent of his ambition. On the whole, he may be considered as sustaining a respectable rank among the poets of our country.

A writer of a different cast from those we have mentioned, and distinguished by a singular boldness of imagination, as well as great humour, was Dr. Samuel Hopkins, who, in 1786, and the year following, in conjunction with Trumbull, Bar-

low, and Humphreys, and other wits of that time, wrote the *Anarchiad*, a satire, on a plan similar to that of the *Rolliad*, which appeared in the *New Haven Gazette* of those years, and of which the mildest parts are attributed to him. He was likewise author of the *Speech of Hesper*, and some smaller poems, which have been praised for their wit. There is a coarseness and want of polish in his style; and his imagination, daring and original, but unrestrained by a correct judgment, often wanders into absurdities and extravagances. Still, if he had all the madness, he must be allowed to have possessed some of the inspiration of poetry.

One material error of taste pervades the graver productions of these authors, into which it should seem they were led by copying certain of the poets of England, who flourished near the period in which they began to write. It was their highest ambition to attain a certain lofty, measured, declamatory manner—an artificial elevation of style, from which it is impossible to rise or descend without abruptness and violence, and which allows just as much play and freedom to the faculties of the writer as a pair of stilts allows the body. The imagination is confined to one trodden circle, doomed to the chains of a perpetual mannerism, and condemned to tinkle the same eternal tune with its fetters. Their versification, though not equally exceptionable in all, is formed upon the same stately model of balanced and wearisome regularity. Another fault, which arises naturally enough out of the peculiar style which we have imputed to these poets, is the want of pathos and feeling in their writings—the heart is rarely addressed, and never with much power or success. Amidst this coldness of manner, sameness of imagery and monotony of versification, the reader lays down his book, dazzled and fatigued.

In 1800 appeared the poems of William Clifton, who fell at the age of twenty seven, a victim to that scourge of our climate which ceases not to waste when other diseases are sated—the pulmonary consumption. There is none of our American poetry, on which we dwell with more pleasure, mingled indeed with regret at the untimely fate of the writer, than these charming remains. Amidst many of the immature effusions of his greener years, and unfinished productions which were never meant to meet the eye of the world, there are to be found specimens of poetry, not only more delicate, classical and polished, but more varied in imagery, and pos-

sessing more of that flexibility of style of the want of which in others we have complained, and more faithful to nature and the feelings, than it has often been our lot to meet with, in the works of our native poets. In his later and more finished productions, his diction is refined to an unusual degree of purity, and through this lucid medium the creations of his elegant fancy appear with nothing to obscure their loveliness.

Several respectable additions have been made to the mass of American poetry by Mr. Alsop. His monody on the death of Washington was admired at the time of its appearance. The public is likewise indebted to him for a version of the poem of Silius Italicus on the Punic war, and another of the Second Canto of Berni's Orlando Inamorato. Often elegant, but occasionally relapsing into feebleness and languor, his poetry is that of a man of correct and cultivated taste, but of no very fervid genius, nor bending the faculties of his mind with much intensity to the work in which he was engaged.

The posthumous works of St. John Honeywood, Esq. were published in the year 1801. These modest remains, the imperfect but vigorous productions of no common mind, have not been noticed as they deserved. They contain many polished and nervous lines.

We should not expect to be easily pardoned, were we to pass by the writings of a poet who enjoyed, during his life time, so extensive a popularity as the late Mr. Paine. The first glow of admiration, which the splendid errors of his manner excited in the public, is now over, and we can calmly estimate his merits and defects. He must be allowed to have possessed an active and fertile fancy. Even in the misty obscurity, which often shrouds his conceptions not only from the understanding of the reader, but, it should seem, from that of the writer himself, there sometimes break out glimpses of greatness and majesty. Yet with a force and exuberance of imagination which, if soberly directed, might have gained him the praise of magnificence, he is perpetually wandering in search of conceits and extravagances. He is ambitious of the epigrammatic style, and often bewilders himself with attempts to express pointedly what he does not conceive clearly. More instances of the false sublime might perhaps be selected from the writings of this poet, than from those of any other of equal talents, who lived in the same period. The brilliancy of Paine's poetry is like the brilliancy of frost-work—cold and fantastic. Who can point out the

passage in his works, in which he speaks to the heart in its own language? He was a fine, but misguided genius.

With respect to the prevailing style of poetry, at the present day, in our country, we apprehend that it will be found, in too many instances, tinged with a sickly and affected imitation of the peculiar manner of some of the late popular poets of England. We speak not of a disposition to emulate whatever is beautiful and excellent in their writings,—still less would we be understood as intending to censure that sort of imitation which, exploring all the treasures of English poetry, culls from all a diction, that shall form a natural and becoming dress for the conceptions of the writer,—this is a course of preparation which every one ought to go through before he appears before the public—but we desire to set a mark on that servile habit of copying, which adopts the vocabulary of some favourite author, and apes the fashion of his sentences, and cramps and forces the ideas into a shape, which they would not naturally have taken, and of which the only recommendation is, not that it is most elegant or most striking, but that it bears some resemblance to the manner of him who is proposed as a model. This way of writing has an air of poverty and meanness—it seems to indicate a paucity of reading as well as perversion of taste—it might almost lead us to suspect that the writer had but one or two examples of poetical composition in his hands, and was afraid of expressing himself, except according to some formula which they might contain—and it ever has been, and ever will be, the resort of those who are sensible that their works need some factitious recommendation, to give them even a temporary popularity.

We have now given a brief summary of what we conceived to be the characteristic merits and defects of our most celebrated American poets. Some names, of which we are not at present aware, equally deserving of notice with those whom we have mentioned, may have been omitted—some we have passed over, because we would not willingly disturb their passage to that oblivion, towards which, to the honour of our country, they are hastening—and some elegant productions of later date we have not commented on, because we were unwilling to tire our readers with a discussion which they may think already exhausted.

On the whole there seems to be more good taste among those who read, than those who write poetry in our country. With respect to the poets whom we have enumerated, and

whose merits we have discussed, we think the judgment pronounced on their works by the public will be found, generally speaking, just. They hold that station in our literature to which they are entitled, and could hardly be admired more than they are, without danger to the taste of the nation. We know of no instance in which great poetical merit has come forward, and finding its claims unallowed, been obliged to retire to the shade from which it emerged. Whenever splendid talents of this description shall appear, we believe that there will be found a disposition to encourage and reward them. The fondness for literature is fast increasing in our country—and if this were not the case, the patrons of literature have multiplied, of course, and will continue to multiply with the mere growth of our population. The popular English works of the day are reprinted in our country—they are dispersed all over the union—they are to be found in every body's hands—they are made the subject of every body's conversation. What should hinder our native works, if equal in merit, from meeting an equally favourable reception?

We suppose that Mr. Brown would not think himself greatly obliged to us, were we to say nothing of the book whose title we have placed at the head of this article. He has come before the public, it seems, with the laudable purpose of rescuing the poetical reputation of his countrymen from the calumnies of foreigners, not only by a zealous defence of their poetry, but by the examples which he gives the world of his own. In a strange sort of preface to the volume, after saying a great deal about Greece and Rome, he accuses the British ministry of having endeavoured to detract from the literary character of the people of the United States, for the purpose of discouraging the emigration of the subjects of that kingdom to this country. We cannot afford any extracts from this curious production, but pass on to that part of the volume which is in verse. The principal poem in the collection is the *Essay on American Poetry*, in which, after beginning, as in his preface, with something about Greece and Rome, he takes up the gauntlet against the Reviewers of Great Britain—the Scotch Reviewers in particular, against whom he inveighs with peculiar bitterness. Why all this gall towards the Scotch Reviewers, we cannot imagine, especially if he alludes, as is probable, to the writers of the *Edinburgh Review*, whose opinions concerning our nation we have ever considered as more liberal than those of most of their brethren, and who must be allowed, by all who have read the

article in that work on the subject of Peace with America, written not long before the close of the late war—a composition, which we might defy any American to read, without a glow of national exultation—to have done ample justice to all the honourable and generous traits of our character. The author proceeds to introduce the Genius of Columbia, a personage who has so often appeared in our poetry—not to speak of innumerable patriotic songs and the like, where she is employed as a convenient piece of standing pageantry—that, we must confess her company has, with us, grown a little stale. The following lines however, on this common subject, in no very difficult style of composition, nor putting the author to the perplexity of much thought or invention, we think the best in the volume.

‘ High on a sapphire throne, in royal state,
The guardian Genius of Columbia sat ;
Suspended arms adorn the spacious Hall ;
The star decked banner floats along the wall ;
The tombs of sleeping worthies rise around,
And silence treads the consecrated ground.
Across the harp her graceful arms she flings,
And all her “ flying fingers kiss the strings.”
Of heroes, long she sung, in battle slain,
While ravished mortals listened to her strain ;
She told the deeds their warrior-hands had done,
Their toils encountered and their laurels won.’

Into the mouth of this Genius he puts a profuse panegyric on the poets of America—in particular on his three favourites, Dwight, Barlow, and Paine, who, in the opinion of Mr. Brown, are destined to shine forth in all the splendour of immortality, when the mists of malice and prejudice shall have passed away. The work concludes with an address to the nine Muses, whom, to shew his familiarity with ancient learning, he summons before him one by one, calls each of them by name, tells her what are her proper attributes and province, and what he expects her to do. In the following line he lets us still farther into the secret of the extent of his classical attainments.

‘ And sportive *Thalia*! Mirth’s facetious queen.’

Till we read the work of Mr. Brown, we had supposed, that in the word *Thalia*, the accent should be placed on the second

syllable. But what will be said to such a startling outrage on all quantity and pronunciation as the following.

‘Thou, *Terpsichore*, the mazy dance shalt lead.’

To the Essay on American Poetry succeeds a variety of miscellaneous poems, to which is prefixed the following singular advertisement.

‘In the following *fugitives*, it has been the express design of the author to cultivate variety. He has introduced between forty and fifty different kinds of measure—not only to relieve the reader, but also to exemplify the most approved diversities of English metre. Several species of verse have been necessarily omitted, lest the volume should exceed its intended size.’

So that we may now add to our other literary boasts, that we have American poetry of every kind of metre ! We have sentimental poetry too, and moral poetry, and descriptive poetry, and patriotic poetry—all the offspring of the prolific genius of Mr. Brown, as we are told in the title page. At first, we thought this rather an extraordinary division of poetry into its different kinds, but in the writings of Mr. Brown they are easily distinguishable from one another. The reader shall have a taste of each. For a specimen of his sentimental poetry—

‘If Valentine Day
Should not vanquish the charmer,
The love-kindling May,
Will surely disarm her.
This Damon found,
And Cynthia too, who felt the wound.
Of music, now, no more let Poets tell,
Since Love can wield a more effective dart—
Though that possess a magic spell
This wins a Maiden’s heart.’

Of his moral poetry the reader must content himself with the following sample.

‘Britannia shall know,
That Columbia’s foe
Shall e’er in the slumbers of Death be laid low.’

The instances which we intend to present the reader of his talents at description, are taken from his Essay on American Poetry.

‘ Where meets the orient sun a lovelier scene
Than in Columbia’s fields of vernal green ?
And where does Cynthia spread her midnight vision
O’er lands so like the fabled fields Elysian ?’

And again,

‘ Pile Alps on Appenines and o’er the whole,
Let Atlas rise to fright the astonished soul ;
When Chimborazo looks through tempests down,
The mole hill crumbles at his Gothic frown.

His patriotic poetry the reader may see exemplified in the following lines.

‘ And while the world shall stand,
Or oceans lave the shore,
Or naval thunders roar,
Macdonough’s splendid victory
To Englishmen shall teach, though never taught before,
That strange as it may be,
While others conquered them by land,
He vanquished them *at sea* !’

To these precious effusions are appended a few notes, which contain a great deal of such interesting information as the following. ‘ This immense body of fresh water, (Lake Superior,) the largest in the world, is 1600 miles in circumference,’ &c. ‘ Chimborazo, the highest elevation of land on the globe, is nearly under the equator in South America,’ &c. ‘ Whether the Mammoth, whose bones were found on the banks of the Ohio and its branches, were the Leviathan of Scripture or not, he is the largest animal of whom we have any account,’ &c. &c. &c. The patriotic song by Dr. Dwight, beginning with

Columbia, Columbia, to glory arise !

and Paine’s Adams and Liberty, are inserted among the notes to the work, not, we presume, for the sake of the present age, for these very popular poems have been printed a hundred different times, and have been read and quoted and sung so often that almost every body has them by heart ; but for the benefit of posterity, to whom the works of Mr. Brown will probably descend, when those of Dwight and Paine are forgotten. Lord Byron’s pathetic Farewell to his Wife is likewise added, as is facetiously observed, ‘ for the amusement of the reader.’ We

will not dwell any longer on this work. Mr. Brown has fallen into a great mistake in thinking himself qualified to write a book. In the present instance, with talents of a very humble order, he has assumed a very pompous tone, and made a great parade of small acquisitions.

ART. X.—*The Speeches of Charles Phillips, Esquire, delivered at the Bar and on various public occasions in Ireland and England. Edited by himself.* New York, published by Kirk & Mercein, 1817.

THE oratory of every people depends so essentially upon their institutions, form of government, education, manners, associations, and other peculiarities, and must be so materially affected, and modified, by any change in these, that we might less expect to find a difference of opinion, and of taste, on this subject, among well informed persons of the same nation, and the same period, than upon almost any other whatever. We are however mistaken in this. Notwithstanding the admirable specimens of oratory, which have been furnished in latter times, by the British parliament and the British bar, there seems to be a very common though loose opinion, that this art comes far short of its former perfection. Their early classical associations, we should think, had provided many persons with such extravagant and incorrect notions on this head, as to prevent them from estimating without prejudice the real excellencies of modern oratory, and from forming a just opinion of the character it has necessarily taken from the present state of society. Century has followed century since the decline of the ancient republics—the world has improved and continues daily to improve in the knowledge of government, of manners, of science, and of all the useful arts—but we still look back with admiration and regret to those states as alike the school and the mausoleum of eloquence. The Pitts, the Mansfields, the Sheridans, the Burkes, the Currans, and Erskines have indeed done much to revive the fallen spirits of those, who had feared that the damps and chills of the dark ages had extinguished forever the flame of eloquence ; but even they, it is said, have attempted in vain to equal the masters who so long ago preceded them. The body and substance of oratory is thought still to remain,—all that is argumentative and weighty and practical,—but that excitement of the passions, that stir